

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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WILDLIFE WATCHING MOST POPULAR RECREATION ON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

"Wildlife watching" was the most popular single recreation among an estimated 15.6 million visits to national wildlife refuges last year, a survey by the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife indicates.

Wildlife watching, which includes bird watching, plus walking or riding tours and photography, was a major reason given for 6,100,000 visits to the Bureau's refuge system in 1967. The average visitor spent two hours on this observation.

Fishing, a primary purpose for 4,100,000 visits, was the second most frequent activity. Fishermen participated in their pastime an average of 5.5 hours.

Although hunting on the refuges is controlled, 600,000 visits included this recreation. Hunters were occupied for six hours each visit.

The refuge system consists of 29 million acres in 317 units. Although the main reason for these areas is to preserve a favorable environment for wildlife, the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 legalizes appropriate recreation as a "secondary purpose."

During the past year, about half the total recreational use occurred on seven refuges--Crab Orchard in Illinois; Wichita Mountains in Oklahoma; Upper Mississippi in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin; Charles M. Russell in Montana; Kenai in Alaska; Havasu Lake in California; and Buffalo Lake in Texas.

Since 1962, the recreational use of refuges has increased by 50 percent. Most of the activities are related to wildlife, such as hunting, fishing and observation.

Swimming, however, was an activity on part of 57 refuges last year; other refuges provided limited boating and water skiing.

Types of Visitations on 209 Wildlife Refuges in 1967

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Totals*</u>	<u>Average Hours</u>
Wildlife Observation (including Photography)	6,100,000	2.0
Fishing	4,200,000	5.5
Picnicking	1,650,000	.45
Boating	1,600,000	2.9
Camping	1,100,000	20.7
Swimming	850,000	5.23
Hunting	600,000	6.0
Water Skiing	400,000	3.0
Field Trials	15,000	4.0
Bird and Animal Calling	3,000	6.08
Dog Training	1,500	2.0
Other	850,000	2.26

*Some visitors participated in more than one activity.

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